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OUTPOSTS

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NICHOLAS MOORE

The Bursting Flame

WHEEL of the peregrine or wheel of fire,
We do not tire of birds, nor of the flame.
These hold our prophecies, are ominous.
Though we heed not the priests, we heed their emblems,
The hawk, the candle, and the holy cross.

We also heed the savage of the storm,
The roll of thunder and the sudden sickle
That rends the oak apart : we know these signs
For what they are : we know the wheel of fire,
The bird of prey, the lessons of our time.

Yet we are the not-known of ravagers,
Whose deeds lie in the dark, and are not seen :
The general storm covers our single stem
That strives in the dark night, and bursts in flame,
A wheel more perilous than hawk or candle.

JOHN ATKINS

Union

WITH the keen winds from Newlands biting me
and no doubt many skeletons buried in the beach
I am almost a corpuscle in this ridge of limestone,
pocked with chalk. Live pocket in a batch

of geological symbols, penned with sheep and cow,
floating gull, bucking rabbit, wind-spreadeagled pine,
I touch the stiff grass, run my frosted fingers
along the sympathetic spine of a rat's pain.

Out of touch, out of earshot, away
from the elephantine forms of monumental stone,
all these elements coalesce in a structure
veined by quaint customs, with mercy like a stain.

A staunch metabolism drives my blood
in channels through the close-knit coastal lands ;
I bleed upon the pebbles of the cove,
faint with the loss of vigour Vega lends.

ADAM DRINAN

New Year Greeting

WHEN the fork goes into the small food,
remember the men that starved :
when the air sinks below comfort,
be mindful of women who froze :
when the hand savours the scented water
or touches the skin of a child,
bless the flesh that suffered.

Then the brightness of the first sun of the year
go generous through you :
then the whiteness of the first moon of the year
glow tender to you :
then the rightness of the first thought of the year
endure to its end
with the sun and the moon

and the multitude of the stars, and all multitudes, friendly ;
and you friendly to them,
whose peace is not the silence on them
but the sound of them working together :
stars, moon and sun,
women and men.
The world be one.

NESSIE DUNSMUIR

Poem on a Diary

IN their network a lucky caul.
Those sailors who wait for landfall
must first through memory steal.

As always the sea fares west.
Only in mountains and vast
waterways flying from rest

can the word's life be found.
In the hauled ark of the drowned
the ship and the shallows of sand

entangle the life and the word.
What saviour, what terrible sword
can fall from the gale of the lord.

Nowhere in climate or sound
logged by whalemén or bound
by the royal bookmen who stand

at the back of the cerebral shelf
can the diary of the self-
sung ache be found, be wealth.

PETER WELLS

From The Solitary Dancer

I HEAR your song over the tops of the mountains
When evening primroses curl up their sad faces.
The echo of the water in the fountain
Chimes like a bell among forgotten voices.
I remember the sound of your faint footfall,
And the prayers of the flowers you carried in your basket.

If from fear this final appeal shall shatter your face
into fragments
To float among the waters where only the anemones
flower,
I shall not turn with fists of energy like towers
To sound in the shoals the desperate, eventual hour :
But with poverty shall scour the eroded pavement
For the achievement lost amid a wreck of showers.

The leaf, the late afternoon shall hold your gift
Of sleepless centuries under the stone tower
Hearing the rain in the tired gutter falling
And the pebbles counting their griefs beneath your
window :

I shall hold the scarlet leaves of ivy where the
spiders wander
Combing impenetrable tunnels of earth for the wonder
Of your face hidden and your soft hair curling
Among the roots that drink in the cool evening :
And only rise with a bombardment of agony, shall I,
See the sad walls crumble, and the guns' slow smoke
Drift over your city ; and your griefs tumble.

HENRY TREECE

Tragic Hero

(For Bernard Miles)

HE leans against a pillar. In his eyes
Rests neither recognition of defeat
Nor visioned victory ; such polished stones
Burn without speculation in the floods,
Reflecting nothing. Dagger's flowered hilt
Catches the beam in dance hysterical,
And the gay rings, fine knuckles' sepulchre,
Shine as his fingers seek the painted wound.
Yet there is nothing here, save brilliance,
Sun's mate in light, obscuring right and wrong ;
Only strange singing at some rainbow's end.

The curtain falls too soon, and we go out
Into the ordinary street with pasteboard grief
Perched in our memory. If we returned
But one hour later, when the dust they raised
Had settled to the quiet boards again,
We should find whimpering humility
Lonely before an unrelenting stone,
Crying for audience and getting none,
Begging forgiveness to an empty stage.
The scent of grave-cloths, heavy in the aisles,
Would send us to the street without our smiles.

FRANCIS BERRY

The Child and her Toy

RIDE the rocking horse, my child,
Give it taunting spur and scarlet whip,
Jerk the bit, let painted rockers wildly
Swing, blood drip from cut and crafty lip.

Later, wooden horse or real will,
Rearing, reach a hoof to planet Mars,
Scrape fiery copper from its oily peel,
Turn armed (with giant teeth and murder-eye) and squealing
Push you down to dark cave's biting stars

Where Helen's breasts mourn white through rolling smoke,
Siege-rams forever thump upon the Door,
Gong clamours, the tombed Dead stagger choking,
Where, little child, the rumbling sad-eyed Boar
Nuzzles, tusks, and shoves each famous Whore,
Winks infamy as, gorged, he stands to rock.

O laughing mistress now of wicked master !
Ride, my child, dig deep each pretty spur.

ERIC PETERS

The Sea My Sorrow

THAT sun which closed the sailor's throat,
That sea which scoured out his eyes,
Blooms like a flower in the skies—
On lace-frilled bosom wears a boat.

Dancing their ballet on the waves
Ten thousand crocuses of light
Confound the doom of ocean's night,
The foundered ships, communal graves.

As each smooth roller's crumbling comb
Comes tumbling down its glass-green neck,
I picture storm and monstrous wreck
And seamen serpentine in foam.

Deft elf-birds drop like stones to pluck
Sleek leapers covetous for prey,
And small white water-fingers splay
An instant where their daggers struck . . .

The years have torn with cynic hand
What peace I ever knew apart,
And sealed a sorrow in my heart
Which time and tide have writ in sand :

For I am fish and fowl and all —
The drowning and the sea-cold dead ;
The coral rocks inside my head,
And in my ears the sirens' call.

KENNETH GEE

Poem for my Father

BLOWN by autumnal dark gales

And dusky with leaf-filled and bird-amazed air
Come from the blue west and the rocks of Wales,
My father's land lies, burdened with time's melancholy : there
The wind sighs, rain comes in a gentle sleep down
On the granite setts, from the crowding hills :
The street shines like the rich silk woven in that town
Where he was cradled between the moor and the mill.

Far sunken in a dream of time is that place :
An old man remembers the north's hard winters
And sees with the distant eye of age the excellent grace
Of the lithe skaters he once knew and the merry dancers.
If they could fill up the glasses with gay wine
And tell beyond midnight their old, true tales,
They would drink to the dead laid down too soon in time,
Nor count the swift night by candles and clock-bells.

In the autumnal cold blue air
His own garden hangs cloudily among fires
Of pale grass and flaming leaves ; and there
Is less reality than in his own desires
Or the intricate, lost figures on the ice : he knows old age
Is a final stirring of the bones,
Not bitterness or calm or rage,
Grows free by what it gradually disowns.

PABLO NERUDA

There is no Forgetting

IF YOU ask me where I've been to
I must say, " So all falls out."
I must speak of the soil that the stones darken,
Of the river that, enduring, destroys itself ;
I know nothing except the things that the birds lose,
The sea behind me, or my sister crying.
Why so many regions, why does a day
Join with a day ? Why does a black night
Pile up within the mouth ? Why the dead ?

If you ask me where I come from, I must consult debris,
Utensils excessively soured,
Great animals frequently rotted,
And my envenomed heart.
Are not memories, these that have crossed my way,
Nor is this the yellowish dove that sleeps in oblivion,
But faces with tears,
Fingers on the throat,
And what comes plopping downwards from the leaves :
The darkness of a day transversible,
Of a day nourished with our own sad blood.

There are violets, here, swallows,
Everything that delights us and appears
On the delectable post cards with tails of views
Through which sweetness and time pass.
But do not let us penetrate farther beyond these teeth,
Nor bite the shells that silence gathers in heaps,
For I do not know what to answer :
There are so many dead,
So many wharves the red sun shattered,
So many heads that crack against the ships,
So many hands that have encircled kisses,
And so many things I desire now to forget.
(Tr. G. S. Fraser).

MARY HODGKINSON

City Snow

O BRITTLE world of snow ! the icicles
that fringe the eaves will melt and softly flow
into the gathered waters, and the crust
of snow upon the spouting crack and fall,
the wire will lose its solid sheath of ice,
the bush be stripped of glassy ornament.
Even now the ramparts crumble, and the snow
slides from the skylight, where I seem to catch
the clustering stars ; and we rejoice to hear
chortling and gurgling from the brimming grids,
while cold cascades gush out of broken pipes.
The brittle world has vanished. Beauty goes—
as all too seldom—leaving no decay.

STANLEY SNAITH

The Cherry Tree

RESURRECTING to the sun
The blossoming flesh of the dead,
You tell in a breviary of flower
What the storm-mouthed oracle said,
That the thought once thought, the action done,
Claim the reversion of their hour
In the magnanimity of Time.
So as you burn against my dream,
A widowed insight driven afield
Comes to my roof-tree reconciled,
Makes me my youth's contemporary.
O when I bring your breathing close,
My white infanta, can you see
What chasms of regret and loss
My hand is stretched across ?

DANNIE ABSE

Poem at 4 a.m.

CITY of dawns, lover, before the tumult
of the suns and the guns of the clock,
again and again shock our eyelids'
grace of night ; O before the graveyard
light disperses over the rooftops ;
before images arise before eyes
unready for images ; before we know again
the cruel finger of the river
twisting its hurt into the dying sea,
remain perfect in your silence, O lover,
perfect as a tree or child ripe as any death.

Too soon the grey cry runs out of us.
Too soon the oblong door of lamplight closes,
and the clatter-patter of voices loses
its way through our voice. Though glad I am
of my tune of flames, though glad I am
to wander wondering into the stark dark
resonant with all tomorrows' echoes,
one tomorrow will soon be enough, lover,

for our peace and the city's peace,
for our flesh and the city's flesh,
to be cut again in pain at the sad joy.

I try now not to die after my death.
I try to cry out my hymn, not for the knife,
but for the ghost of the knife, for the life of dawns,
for grey sleepers, now tears, in each other's arms.

ROLAND MATHIAS

The Flooded Valley

MY house is empty but for a pair of boots :
The reservoir slaps at the privet hedge and uncovers the roots
And afterwards pats them up with a slack good will :
The sheep that I market once are not again to sell.
I am no waterman, and who of the others will live
Here, feeling the ripple spreading, hearing the timbers grieve ?
The house I was born in has not long to stand :
My pounds are slipping away and will not wait for the end.

I will pick up my boots and run round the shire
To raise an echo louder than my fear.
Listen, Caerfanell, who gave me a fish for my stone,
Listen, I am alone, alone.
And Grwyney, both your rivers are one in the end
And are loved. If I command
You to remember me, will you, will you,
Because I was once at noon by your painted church of Patricio?
You did not despise me once, Senni, or run so fast
From your lovers. And O I jumped over your waist
Before sunrise or the flower was warm on the gorse.
You would do well to listen, Senni. There is money in my purse.

So you are quiet, all of you, and your current set away
Cautiously from the chapel ground in which my people lie . .
Am I not Kedward, Prosser, Morgan, whose long stones
Name me despairingly and set me chains ?
If I must quarrel and scuff in the weeds of another shire
When my pounds are gone, swear to me now in my weakness,
swear
To me poor you will plant a stone more in this tightening field
And name there your latest dead, alas your unweaned feeblest
child.

ROBIN ATTHILL

The Watcher : 400 A.D.

THE Roman twilight lingered : behind the Wall
sleep was uneasy, fearing the whispered raid,
glancing over the shoulder as shadows fell
on the straining silence of the empty road.
Dicing away the drab relentless days,
awaiting the end, they shuddered at the shrill
lament of the wind keening above the bass
burden of civilisation's dying fall.
Plunging westward over the jostling whale-
backed sea, the grey and snarling winter waste,
drove the barbarian prow : the sudden sword
slashed into the brain, relieved the tired
vigil, while the blind waves thudded against
the cliff, and the Gothic darkness buried all.

MURIEL SPARK

She wore his Luck on her Breast

ALL day she wore his luck on her breast but the trick
turned in upon her, the blade of
her two edged charm fell back between her hills ;
and sore foreboding stopped her tongue suddenly
with the chill of the day upon her.

The morning sun shall never more kindle
beacons on her two hills, who once had stood in the
thrice-woven circles of fire.
His luck was a live coal ; this was the locket
she wore all day on her breast.

But she astonished the land before the day was over ;
the trees ran to her side full of her folly,
the pasturing beasts aghast,
and only her fist that pressed to her molehill throat
betrayed the turn of his luck,
though the charm, the locket and the double weapon
are locked O evermore
like a gem or a tomb in the white rock of her valley.

THE BAROQUE VISION

A NOTE ON THE POETRY OF GEORGE BARKER

ERNEST FROST

GEORGE Barker's third book, *Poems*, appeared in 1935. Before this time his voice had apparently been obscured by the neater, more immediate rhetoric of W. H. Auden, and the bitter post-Georgian lyricism of C. Day Lewis. If the last named poets ruled the thirties, as we are led to believe, George Barker did not fit in with the reign. He was much too occupied with exploring himself: the dark abstract inside, the taste of words like sweets, the Doric possibilities of language, the basilicas of his reflection in the mirror. To all intents he was the sensual writer in his private chamber pondering on the eternal "I"—a figure possibly repulsive to those writers whose motions juggled with Marx, Freud and the Party Line. Certainly there is nothing in his work to compare with those phrases picked up in the Worker's Bookshop which litter and spoil much of the poetry of the thirties. Barker, it seems, was more concerned with *otherness* and the *pure* evocation.

"Seven ribbed Narcissus of my dream
Embrace me with your floral arm . . ."

isn't intellectual, and it says nothing for Society, but it *is* clothed in tongues; it isn't some starved, semi-intellectual poem-polemic. Barker, one suspects, valued the ornate for its size, its room to swing the soul's thin cat. His tongues erected a Baroque fabrication. Whether he could people such palaces was, in 1935, still to be seen.

Consciously to seek philosophical stations of the mind does not seem to me to be the poet's task. The over-cultivated attitude, the utter fear of foolishness or imprecision: these are army uniforms for any poet. Yet, images and no ideas make for a facile poetry. The true poet generates ideas like a silo generating alcohol. Keats' remark about loading every rift with ore is most apposite. In Barker's work there seems to be a combustion of ideas under the hot tongues; an unconscious pattern of considerable intellectual power is formed under the baroque decorations. And though his basilicas resound with the incantations of the ego wounding and glowing—trying to hunt down God, trying to be a bird of flame, a lyre with a human voice—surprisingly the human voice remains, and it is an arresting one.

Poems (1935) is a baroque book, but private and unopened to the world around it. Some of the lines recall Donne:

"I am that face about which fire fell"

"I am that land, surrounding sea
And sky; the structure of my hand
Spreads promontories, and the mountains of knees
Penetrate the great clouds of your desire."

The same heavy sensuality broods and flashes. Words become famous and staring as statues. The ideas fumble under this gold-frowning palace like mice. Where they are imposed consciously and do not grow in the compost of words they are sometimes impoverished mock-metaphysical:

"Time, though slowly, ruins
Love, which with it arbitrates;
But still stars adorn the star
Adorned with stars of Time's war."

Yet, compared with the airmen, the magnetic mountain and the practical joking which passed for poetry in the thirties, this commands attention because it is nearer the truth.

Janus and *Calamiterror* were an advance from the private vision of *Poems*. The human voice becomes more insistent, though the wealth of language does not lessen. Barker is apparently synthesising two attitudes: the personal and the universal. *Janus* is mainly a prose poem on Love and Death. Any dissection of such luminous apprehension is disastrous. It is not writing, it is living, in the terms of Alex Comfort's

"I see the image of the mind's two trees, cast downward—
one tilting leaves to catch the sun's bright pennies,
one dark as water, its root among the bones."

After *Calamiterror* came *Lament and Triumph*. Europe had broken. Its disintegration smokes in this book. Any such disintegration is terrible and incandescent; it is a subject that ought to illumine lines like fires on twisted girders, and Barker succeeds in capturing the agony. But pity tempers these poems, and he blurts out, at one point, clear and ordinarily:

"How, by being miserable for myself, I began,
And now am miserable for the mass of man."

There are elegies that disturb *Lament and Triumph* like black swans. There is nothing idyllic about them for they move in dark waters. They float on the wreck of living, the gold possibilities, the black

endings. There is Barker's lonely, secularist concern with God—not the dry, despairing concern of T. S. Eliot—but a fierce, sensual awareness which recalls the Bethel, the Brothel and Arthur Rimbaud. It becomes apparent that this poet has somehow managed to throw open his baroque palace to the nobody other: not the man in the street but the man with a heart. This is the *Triumph*.

Eros in Dogma is his last book. The overwhelming "I" of the early poems remains in essence, but it moves among a universal consideration of Love. The *Three Memorial Sonnets for two young seamen drowned in Mid-Pacific* have a humanity which compares with Hopkins' *Harry Plowman*:

"At midday they looked up and saw their death
Standing up overhead as loud as thunder
As white as angels and as broad as God . . ."

This passion for others now clothes his own reflection; he moves out from his earlier world of mirrors into a fulfilment of his own personality ranged with and in those of his fellows. In this he has moved further than Rimbaud towards relating his illuminations to the grain of other lives.

Eros in Dogma is a sensual rediscovery of man and woman after their relegation to statistical reports, wars, breadlines and Belsens. The language is monumental and weighted heavily with a rich imagery. It protests, in its over life-size way, at the under ant-size aspirations of an Industrial Society. Most of all it reaffirms the value of the senses, sanguinely, and in words which have an Elizabethan force and colour; words, one feels, which Barker is printing excitedly for the first time. It is a baroque vision, for it aims at *gloire* in spite of its black utterances; it is imprecise in the way that living, tempestuous and illogical, is imprecise; it pursues the enormous and the mad with words which try to approximate; yet, suddenly, it can become thus:

"Lovers for whom the world is always absent
Move in their lonely union like twin stars."

The poetry is still in the pity. The baroque palaces, as they do in the great cities of Europe, consort with the slums, the street markets, the dispossessed. In our age, which has great need for humanity in poetry, and need for a reassertion of the peculiar vigour and richness of our language, Barker is one of the true poets of man and his agony: the agony of being man and not a political unit.

THE NEW APOCALYPSE

HENRY TREECE

IT IS now ten years since the, perhaps unfortunately-named, Apocalyptic Movement was founded—if so distinguished a verb may be applied to a midnight meeting of young men in a Leeds garret one bitter night.

Now ten years may sweep a literary ideology into the dark, or it may provide a perspective by which one can view an earlier enthusiasm with an unembarrassed and even wistful aloofness. Ten years after the event, one can smile again, even at one's most serious young self, and the 'Founders' of this Movement, J. F. Hendry, Dorian Cooke, Nicholas Moore and myself, took their young selves very seriously, so seriously in fact that they emulated their Continental *cofrères* and issued a manifesto, in which they declared :

"That Man is in need of greater freedom, economic no less than aesthetic, from machines and mechanistic thinking

That no existent political system, Left or Right, no artistic ideology, Surrealism or the political school of Auden, was able to provide this freedom

That the Machine Age had exerted too strong an influence on art, and had prevented the individual development of Man

That Myth, as a personal means of reintegrating the personality, had been neglected and despised"

All of which, though some of the older critics had fun with it, was very much to the point, even if the words had that air of pretentiousness with which all serious youth seems to invest himself. What many of these critics forgot was that they belonged to the dying, and naturally cynical inter-war world ; what the Apocalyptics forgot was that a creative writer should not meddle with politics, abnormal psychology or industrial theory. But at twenty-four a poet is inclined to flex his muscles and waste his energy ; poets have always done it, from Marlowe to Arthur Rimbaud ; it is an animal form of vocational training. Wise elders should not attack such innocent effort with savagery ; though, being envious of a force which they now lack, they often do, instead of smiling at or ignoring it. Blood will have blood, and so both sides turned to personalities, to their mutual denigration : and, since their first anthology, *The New Apocalypse* (Fortune Press, 1939) was treated with some brutality, the Apocalyptics in their second, *The White Horseman* (Routledge, 1941), set out their case in terms intended to convince and confound stupid critics, and principally those who had accused the Movement of being another

form of Surrealism: "Apocalypse is a dialectical development of Surrealism, embodying all that is positive in Surrealism . . . It is a de-mechanising, or a de-materialising of Surrealism The difference, finally, between the world of Surrealism and the Apocalypse is mainly this: the difference between the madman, who sits back and contemplates all sorts of strange and trivial relationships, freed from the necessity of action, and the sane man, who accepts a dream and fantasy and obscure and terrible desires and energies as a part of his completeness . . ." So spoke the apologist of the Movement, G. S. Fraser, in *The White Horseman*.

But by the time the third anthology, *The Crown and the Sickle* (Staples, 1943), had appeared there seemed little point in proceeding further with this Movement, although many of the best of the younger writers had identified themselves with it by that time.

To understand this remark, one must see the Movement in its particular point in time. Its ideals of completeness and freedom were coming to a head *before* Munich. At a time when so many of the established writers were openly sympathetic to Communism, and the most powerful politicians were openly dictated to by Fascism, the Apocalyptics had the temerity to disown both systems. It is too much to claim that they hoped to prevent war by producing a change of heart in mankind; something like that may have crossed their minds, for they were young and idealistic, but they knew that they were appealing only to a limited number of men, and these men mainly writers and younger writers at that. So, when war became inevitable, the political point of Apocalypse disappeared; the horrors which their poetry had prophesied became tangible realities, against which the verse seemed pale and untrue; the political systems they had condemned came out larger than life to settle their argument with other weapons than words. Man's completeness became more than ever a myth; the reintegration of the personality with society stopped meaning anything (and still means little enough, despite the new and rapidly growing army of psychiatrists, who are now trying to do what the Apocalypse hoped to do in a different way very much earlier).

The other reason for the disappearance of Apocalypse as a loosely corporate body was this: the Movement had come into being largely to vindicate the Romantic outlook, and to provide a home for inveterate romantics, and by 1943 they felt that this object had largely been accomplished. Let us make no mistake here; before the Movement had forced its spearhead into the magazine-and-book world,

this world had mainly been the perquisite of the camera-eyed objective reporters ; its doors had been shut to those who believed with Herbert Read, that " the recording instrument, the artist, is a sensitive or subjective element and (that) his view of the world is necessarily affected by his emotional reaction to what he sees." It is my belief that, but for the Apocalyptic Movement, the romantic strain in poetry would have disappeared for a considerable time. It had been too ruthlessly liquidated by those who, anxious to be finally rid of Georgianism, had watched the romantic baby topple down the waste pipe without a qualm. Whoever doubts this may substantiate my point for me by looking at back files of the *Criterion*, *New Verse*, *Contemporary Prose and Poetry* and *Twentieth Century Verse*, the best-known avant-garde magazines of the time (most of the other periodicals which printed verse were either irresponsible or still snuffling the dead air of the Nineties).

Now romanticism is as characteristic a part of British literary scene as damp weather and lush grass are part of the climatic and geographical scenes—and I make the comparison in full knowledge of the ways in which it might be turned against the Movement I am describing. And who denies the romantic attitude (or the damp weather, or the lush, even rank grass) denies truth, denies the completeness of poetry, denies its *organic* character. No man has a corner in criticism, any more than he has a monopoly of method : all manners are acceptable, provided they are the honest expression of a personality. They may vary in their absolute value—if one could find such an absolute—but they are at least acceptable in a civilised world.

I do not imply that the young poets who contributed to the three Apocalyptic anthologies were the Perfect Romantics. What I do contend is that they helped to re-establish romanticism as a valid and acceptable mode of literary expression. And if they did nothing else they brought enthusiasm to a tired literary world. Naturally, as one gets older and quieter, the form of an earlier enthusiasm may seem misguided : today, J. F. Hendry's early poems appear to me uncouth and difficult to speak ; Moore's seem unco-ordinated and pointless ; Fraser's dull ; McCaig's galvanic and hysterical ; my own too full of sound and fury . . . We were all imperfect in our several ways ; we yelled our heads off, we tormented the verb in a hundred fantastic manners, and we acted the prodigal with our adjectives until they were ankle-deep on the page. But we were sincere and not entirely self-seeking. And we did try to do, and almost succeeded in doing, more than most groups of poets had done for many years.

It would be uncritical for anyone to think of a particular literary Movement as an isolated phenomenon ; we all belong to the past at some point or another, or at a number of such points ; it is from this past, or a fusion of pasts, that we project our future. Apocalypse was nothing new then : its title was biblical and implied bardic prophesy and cataclysm, and its principle tenets were implicit in the work of the Elizabethans and the Jacobeans, of Donne, Hopkins, Joyce and Lawrence. All that seemed new about it in 1938 was that the poetic world had for ten years been unaccustomed to richness, music, and a certain animal gusto.

I would like to put on record here a critically popular misconception of this Movement, if only to hold it up now as a horrid warning to all intolerants. On the one occasion when I was introduced to the late James Agate (and I wish that he had lived long enough for there to be more, for there was much in his perennial forcefulness to admire), he said to me quite vehemently : " You are the most pernicious influence of your generation." And when I asked him why he said that, he replied, " You are making all the young poets become Romantics."

Now one doesn't *make* young poets become anything : they write as they do because they believe as they do ; and it is their world to choose from. Those who were With Us, we printed, provided their work, was, as we thought, good enough. Those who weren't, took other paths, perhaps quite as valid as our own . . .

Ten years after the event (with the varied experiences of Anarchism, Personalism and Existentialism to help me get things straight), I see clearly that we were only trying to make poetry more tolerant—hardly anything at all more than that. It is perhaps one of life's minor tragedies that youth is always forced by age to plead tolerance in so intolerant a voice.

REVIEWS

The King of Asine : George Seferis (John Lehmann, 7s. 6d.).

Holes in the Sky : Louis Macneice (Faber, 7s. 6d.).

Orisons : Iain Fletcher (Poetry London Editions, 7s. 6d.).

The Uncertain Margin : W. J. Harvey (Fortune Press, 7s. 6d.).

NOW in his forty-eighth year, Mr. George Seferis holds a position of eminence among the growing body of Greek poets. Since he entered the Diplomatic Service in 1926, he has regarded himself

as a perpetual exile and the catastrophical impact of two world wars during his lifetime has so changed his beloved Greece that although he knows "However far I go voyaging, still Greece wounds me," he also feels that his native heritage is "lost for ever beyond the ocean." His poetry, loaded with the vast experiences of his race, has a wider appeal than the poetry of his compatriots because Seferis is also a European. The ardour of his nostalgia for Greece is tempered by the knowledge that the tragedy of Greece is but a part of the world's tragedy and his poetry is saved from pessimism by a constant note of hope.

"If pain is the human lot we are not men merely in order
to suffer,
That is why I think so much these days of the great river,
That great advancing meaning among the herbs and weeds . . ."

Once upon a pre-B.B.C. time, Mr. Macneice was also aware of the "advancing meaning" and pointed the way with a shrewd and economic rhetoric. In the present volume there are traces of the old fire and in two poems he reaches his poetic zenith: *Elegy for Minor Poets* and *Carrick Revisited*. His satire is still potent, but his bagpipes are playing without their old fervour and without any recognisable theme.

After the bagpipes the lute, played wittily and effectively by Mr. Iain Fletcher. His poems, labelled *Orisons: Picaresque and Metaphysical*, are in the tradition of Donne to a degree that will evoke bleats of delight from many a word-weary connoisseur of contemporary poetry. The stringencies of the Auden School, the verbal gymnastics of the Thomas-Barker group and the prophetic zeal of the Apocalyptics have all passed Mr. Fletcher by.

"Dawn of Dryden, decadence of Donne.
I, who am proud to be your son,
Who live while you are lost, and live
Until your deathless crown is won:
Pardon my darker wit, forgive
This long unhonouring of your own
True verse and stone.

It is the time to cry
Your virtual worth, to rectify
The false declension
Of your once radiant laurel-crown."

His love poems are the most attractive part of a fresh and musical offering, marred by the inclusion of two unnecessary discords. The reader first sings about "a giggling greengage whore" and the second, *Aromatic Ballade*, is in forced acrostic form.

Bad selection is a feature of *The Uncertain Margin*, which presents Mr. W. J. Harvey, who is one of those competent poets who will probably never attain greatness, but whose work can give the lingering reader occasional moments of real pleasure; Mr. Harvey's poem *Epithalamium* is a case in point. One feels that delayed publication and a more careful selection would have been to the advantage of Mr. Harvey and to the greater advantage of his readers. Some of his poems are undigested Hopkins, notably the *Fragment* that starts "Wing-whirl, swallow, wing-hurled, rocked . . ." and undiluted Harvey, as in *The Voyages*, would have been more acceptable.

B. EVAN OWEN.

Edith Sitwell : C. M. Bowra (Anglo-French Literary Services, through the Lyrebird Press, 5s. 6d.).

The Drowned Sailor : James Kirkup (Grey Walls Press, 6s. od.).

SOMEWHERE recently I have read that Edith Sitwell is a "herald of a decaying civilisation." This sort of statement may be truth but it is only one facet of the truth, and reveals the timeliness of Dr. Bowra's critical essay. He traces Miss Sitwell's progress from its source, showing an early alliance to her work, between subject and form, rhythm and meaning, sound and image, leading to the more significant poetry she produced during the last war years.

Miss Sitwell occupies a phenomenal position in the history of poetry; she is a poet of vast conceptions, of Myth and splendour; her ideas are not the neat, whimsical, subjective affairs we perhaps too readily expect from women poets. It is easy for a critic to show that Miss Sitwell's poetry has the loaded energy of Hopkins, imagery reminiscent of Blake, the shrewdness of Pope or the deftness of T. S. Eliot in the presentation of classical allusions with an original twist—and still fail to lay a finger on Miss Sitwell's essential style. Dr. Bowra examines the influences of great poets upon her work, but adds "... an admirer equally of Pope and Pound, she has always been guided by her own light, her unfailing recognition of true poetry wherever it is to be found." This book should prove valuable to students who are approaching a study of Miss Sitwell's work, and indeed, to all her readers.

Mr. Kirkup is one of the most interesting of the younger poets who are departing from what had become a tradition—a preoccupa-

ition with despair and the Death Wish (acceptable enough at first but now so cultivated that it no longer possesses power of impact). Mr. Kirkup finds a fulfilment of the death image in variations on the Persephone theme ; his myth is at once personal and universal and is the *motif* of the two long poems in his volume, *The Sleeper in the Earth* and *The Drowned Sailor*.

The most important aspect of these poems is their conception. *The Sleeper in the Earth* moves from the experience of Descent, through Resurrection to Recognition. It is this last section which, I think, is most significant ; the sensation of readjustment to the visual world is described :

“ I see dimly, for my eyes
receive so many things : and yet it seems
that these are leaves and boughs
that move as once I knew, and O,
that moment of a bird, what dark-bright crash of wings.”

n the sense that Emily Bronte described the same experience :

“ When the ear begins to hear, and the eye begins to see
When the pulse begins to throb—the brain to think again—”

If some of the shorter poems in Mr. Kirkup's book are slight, their elegance is their excuse.

MURIEL SPARK.

The Bloom of Candles : Laurie Lee (John Lehmann, 3s. 6d.).

In the Tower's Shadow : N. K. Cruikshank (O.U.P., 6s. od.)

MR. JOHN Lehmann may be justly proud of being the publisher of *The Bloom of Candles*. This slim yellow volume is a beacon in a world of many books of poetry that may give pleasure but do not often startle the reader into full consciousness of a rare beauty.

The Bloom of Candles is Mr. Lee's second book and contains only twelve poems. Six of them must be considered among the finest written during the past 25 years. Indeed they would hold their own in an anthology of lyric poems drawn from all ages. Their imagery throbs, burns with life ; their word texture is sharp, savagely beautiful, colourful and radiant as summer sun ; silver and dark as a winter night. When Mr. Lee writes, in *Thistle* :

“ Your wound in childhood was
a savage shock of joy
that set the bees on fire
and the loud larks singing.”

eye, ear and sensibility are opened to an overpowering sense of beauty ; of nostalgia. Or when, in *Field of Autumn*, he says :

“ Slow moves the hour that sucks our life,
slow drops the late wasp from the flower,
the rose tree’s thread of scent draws then
and snaps upon the air.”

the words, the whole poem, take possession of the reader so that it is as though he had always known them. They become part of him as only true poetry can.

Occasionally the author strains his imagery too far as in “ and their white teeth sweeter than cucumbers ” but, for the most part, these lyrics are gems that cannot fade ; are already part of the great heritage of English lyric poetry.

Miss Cruikshank’s poetry does not bring one “ a savage shock of joy.” Though *In the Tower’s Shadow* contains some well considered poetry there is little that is memorable. Her main theme may be, as the blurb advises, “ The human situation ” but she rarely penetrates her theme deeply. The language to me, seems adequate but not inspired. The result is a collection of competent and not very exciting poems.

C. BUSBY SMITH.

The Undying Day : Robert Greacen (Falcon Press, 7s. 6d.).

YOUNG, and distinguished in Ireland mostly by his success as an editor of literary miscellanies, Mr. Greacen should now properly be placed at the forefront of poets writing in that country at the present time. In *The Undying Day* he shows a measure of sincerity in feeling and thought that is altogether uncommon in the modern poet. Yet the most demonstrable evidence of this—his weakness for writing the unworthwhile poem—has brought one critic to assert that he is “ looking round for suitable themes, suitable attitudes.” His horizons are broad, his perceptions of human banalities acute, and his craftsmanship, if uneven, of a fine order at its best.

Although Mr. Greacen’s work is in the vein of contemporary English rather than Irish poetry, his ‘ influences ’ have been well enough assimilated not to intrude easily upon the reader’s awareness. Such of his poems as *The Undiscovered Island*, *Lines for Friends*, and *A Servant Girl to Her Faithless Lover* supported the belief that he has even better things in store than he has given us so far.

LIONEL MONTEITH.

